



NEWS RELEASE

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SUBJECT: DNR strikes a balance in its decision to maintain chinook salmon stocking levels

MADISON – Following a series of public meetings and review of comments submitted by stakeholders, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will preserve Lake Michigan chinook salmon stocking at current levels while maintaining a diverse and robust fishery. This will be accomplished by reducing stocking levels of other species.

DNR Sec. Cathy Stepp said the decision highlights the importance of Lake Michigan's world class fishery to communities throughout the region and Wisconsin's economy as a whole. Each year, Wisconsin's Great Lakes anglers including those on Lake Michigan contribute \$114.3 million to the economy through direct retail expenditures while generating more than \$12.5 million in state and local taxes.

"We listened closely to our stakeholders and applied the best science available to develop a balanced stocking approach that will maintain exceptional Lake Michigan fishing," Stepp said. "Sustainable angling opportunities work hand in hand with tourism and long-term economic development. We believe this decision represents another step forward to ensure accountability in our decision making and support for great local jobs."

Todd Kalish, DNR fisheries bureau deputy director, said the department put extensive effort into using input from stakeholders to develop an innovative and balanced plan that maintains the recreational, economic and biological benefits of the chinook fishery. The overall plan also includes stakeholder supported collaborative efforts such as increased use of net pens to boost survival; enhanced marketing of the Lake Michigan fishery; and more involvement of stakeholders in data collection.

"We appreciate the public's engagement in the process and for 2017, we intend to again stock some 812,000 chinook in the Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan," Kalish said. "In the years ahead, we look forward to putting a variety of groundbreaking initiatives in place that build on the input we received." In addition to maintaining current stocking levels of chinook, for 2017 the department will increase hatchery space for steelhead production but reduce stocking of other species such as lake trout and brown trout.

For 2017, Wisconsin's Lake Michigan waters will see the stocking of: 812,270 chinook (same as 2016); 452,867 coho (same as 2016); 300,000 lake trout (712,377 actual in 2016); 340,000 steelhead trout

(269,512 in 2016); and 362,000 brown trout (727,014 in 2016). Stakeholders who track the numbers closely should be advised that the actual yield from hatchery production may vary from year to year by approximately 10 percent.

The department's decision fits within the parameters agreed on by the Lake Michigan Committee, a group composed of fisheries managers from states and tribes bordering the lake, said Brad Eggold, DNR Great Lakes fisheries supervisor. Wisconsin's brown trout stocking cuts will be made in areas where stocked fish are not contributing to good fishing while increased steelhead stocking should enhance diverse Lake Michigan and river fishing experiences.

In addition to preserving chinook stocking at near current levels, numerous stakeholders expressed a strong desire to reduce lake trout stocking. As reflected in Wisconsin's final stocking plans, Lake Michigan Committee members have asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to eliminate stocking of yearling lake trout at secondary priority sites in southern Lake Michigan and reduce stocking on Wisconsin's portion of the mid-lake reef to 300,000 for 2017. The result is that about 412,000 fewer lake trout will be stocked in Wisconsin waters starting in 2017.

Meanwhile, a Lake Michigan Technical Committee working group has been tasked to review lake wide lake trout stocking as it relates to individual jurisdictional and multi-jurisdictional management goals.

As part of efforts to address lake wide changes in the food web, since 2011 Wisconsin DNR has held more than 40 meetings, public input opportunities and attended sport and commercial meetings to work with anglers toward a shared vision for management of the prized Lake Michigan fishery. For more information including recent presentations on Lake Michigan management topics, visit dnr.wi.gov and search "[Lake Michigan salmon and trout meetings](#)."